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ABSTRACT

Role playing and modeling are important components of counselor training. To examine gender and ordinal position effects on the role play practice of counselor trainees, 51 beginning students (35 females, 16 males) participated in role play dyads. Following classroom videotape skill training in reflection of feeling responses, subjects were randomly assigned to two levels of gender pairing and two levels of ordinal position in the dyads. During the role play practice, consisting of two 15-minute sessions, counselors focused on the emotions of the client through reflection of feelings. Counselor responses and client statements were analyzed and coded. An analysis of the results showed no differences in the subjects' ability to produce reflection of feeling prior to the role play practice. No significant differences were found for gender pairing or ordinal position on counselor performance. However, females produced more reflection of feeling responses, and their responses tended to be more accurate than those of males. Females in ordinal position two, who had a male partner in position one, outperformed those females who had a female in position one. These findings offer initial support for a prestigious-coping model hypothesis, but further research is needed to investigate sex-role orientation effects. (BL)

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The Effects of Gender and Ordinal Position on Role Play Practice

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The Effects of Gender and Ordinal Position on Role Play Practice

There is a general consensus among counselor training researchers (Teevan & Gabel, 1978; Ford, 1979; Robinson, Froehle & Kurpius, 1979a; Fuqua & Gade, 1982) that modeling is an important component for training novices how to perform counseling skills. In this existing research, however, the model has not been a participant in the learning experience but rather presented separately, often as a expert whose behavior is to be emulated.

Robinson and Cabianca (1983) found that the quality of counselor trainees' skill performance was affected by the counselor's ordinal position when practicing in a triad, and quality steadily improved from roleplay counselor one to roleplay counselor three. In their discussion, Robinson and Cabianca suggested that "live modeling" may have been occurring during the roleplay rehearsal and speculated that the status accorded to various classmates may have influenced the effect of this "live modeling". Since Robinson and Cabianca did not analyze their data by gender of participant or by gender composition in their triads, the influences of gender and gender pairing remain unexamined.

Bandura (1977) has suggested that observers are more likely to learn and successfully to imitate behavior when the model and observer share similar characteristics, such as gender. Although Robinson, et al. (1979a) found that gender of model did not significantly effect counselor skill performance, the possible interaction effects of model gender and

observer gender were not examined. Deaux (1984), in a review of the last decade's literature on gender differences across all areas within psychology, found that results on the specific ways males and females may differ tend to be mixed and when found, differences account for small percentages of the explained variance.

This study attempts to examine gender influences in a unique situation -- roleplay renearsal of counselor trainees. Additionally the possibility of "live modeling" occurring will also be investigated. Specifically, the questions addressed are:

1. Will gender pairing, same sex or opposite sex, influence skill performance in the roleplay practice?
2. Will counselor in ordinal position two, having received the live participant modeling of counselor one, produce more and better reflection of feeling responses than counselor one?
3. Will there be any skill performance differences between male and female counselors regardless of ordinal position and gender pairing?
4. To what extent does gender pairing influence the skill performance of males and females in ordinal position two?

Methods

Participants and Design

Fifty two beginning masters degree students from two sections of an introduction to counseling class participated in this study as part of a required class module. The 36 females and 16 males, attending summer

school at large southwestern university, were predominantly teachers who ranged in age from 22 to 58. The modal age range was 25 to 35.

Participants were randomly assigned by gender to the two levels of gender pairing, same or opposite, and to the two levels of ordinal position, first or second. Students were nested in class section. The design was a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design consisting of class section, gender pairing, ordinal position, and counselor gender.

Dependent Variable

The counselor response chosen as the dependent variable was the microcounseling skill, reflection of feelings. As Brammer (1973) has noted, this skill reflects the "essential feelings, stated or strongly implied, of the helpee" (p. 90).

Reflection of Feelings Training

Prior to involvement in the roleplay dyads, all participants received instruction on the skills of paraphrasing, nonverbal encouragers, and reflection of feelings. The dependent variable for this study was taught using the self-instructional skills training procedures outlined by Robinson, Froehl, & Kurpius (1979b). A videotape presenting a brief overview of reflection of feeling responses, a 15 minute segment depicting a male counselor modeling reflection of feeling responses to a female client, and a practice-feedback segment was shown to the classes. The classes watched and discussed the videotape model and tried producing their own responses to the practice-feedback segment. At the end of the training videotape, ten new client vignettes, each 15 seconds in duration,

were shown to the class. In order to determine whether each participant had learned to produce reflection of feeling responses, each participant individually responded in writing to each of these ten client vignettes. Sixty seconds were allowed for each written response. At the completion of this training and assessment, participants were assigned to the roleplay dyads and asked to meet for the roleplay practice the following day.

Roleplay Practice

When the students reported to class the next day, they were taken by roleplay pairs to the counselor training center (CTC). The CTC, a facility used for direct supervision of counseling, has 30 individual counseling rooms, each equipped with audiotape recorders. After being seated in an individual counseling room, each pair was given a notecard indicating who would be counselor one and who counselor two. They were told to proceed through the two roleplay practices without discussing the events of the first session prior to the second. Each participant was given an audiotape and asked to record his/her session as a counselor.

As a client, each person was to discuss a personal concern. The roleplay counselor's responsibility was to focus primarily on the emotions of the client. The experimenters and their assistants served as time keepers and indicated the beginning and ending of each roleplay practice session. Since each session was 15 minutes long, the total roleplay experience was 30 minutes. Another 45 minutes was allowed for the members of the dyad to process the roleplay experience and to review the audiotapes.

At the end of the lab experience, each person was asked to make a verbatim typescript of his/her own counseling session. These typescripts and audiotapes were collected two days later, and the subjects were debriefed as to the goals of the study. Data from one of the 52 participants was unable to be used in the study because her audiotape was mangled by the tape recorder.

Measurement of Dependent Variable

Participants' responses both to the ten client vignettes and during the roleplay practice were evaluated by two doctoral students. Each set of responses was rated for frequency of reflection of feeling responses and for feeling fidelity. The rating guidelines were:

1. Frequency--whether or not the response could be classified as a reflection of feeling response, rated yes (1) or no (0).
2. Feeling fidelity--the degree to which a response reflected the prevalent emotions conveyed in each client statement, rated from inaccurate, inappropriate (1) to accurate, appropriate (5).

For the client vignette ratings, the interrater agreement for frequency was 96 percent, and the Ebel (1951) reliability coefficient for feeling fidelity was .98. The ratings for these two measures across the ten vignettes were summed to form the dependent measures, client vignette frequency (CVFR) and client vignette feeling fidelity (CVFF), for the procedural check.

For the role play practice, the rating occurred in three phases. Initially, each client statement was judged as to whether (yes or no) it

could stimulate a reflection of feeling response. Interrater agreement for this judgment was 95 percent. Only those counselor responses to the "yes" client statements were rated for frequency and feeling appropriateness. The interrater agreement for frequency was 91 percent, and the intrarater reliability (Ebel, 1951) for feeling fidelity was .89. In phase two, counselor responses were rated for frequency (yes or no), and in phase three, those "yes" counselor frequency responses were rated for feeling fidelity.

As Larrabee and Froehle (1980) have pointed out, client behaviors determine and modify counselor behaviors. To control for client differences, that is, the number of client statements which could stimulate a reflection of feeling counselor responses, each counselor's frequency score was divided by that counselor's client statement score. This new score became the roleplay frequency (RPFR) score used in the data analysis. Similarly, the roleplay feeling fidelity score for each counselor was divided by the RPFR score to get an average feeling fidelity score (RPFF) with a range of zero to five.

Results

As a procedural check, all subjects' scores on the ratings of client vignette frequency (CVFR) and of client vignette feeling fidelity (CVFF) were examined for pre roleplay practice differences. The 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVAs for class section gender pairing, ordinal position, and counselor gender were nonsignificant, $F_s < 1.00$. Therefore, it was assumed that all subjects had equivalent ability to produce reflection of feeling

responses, and therefore, the roleplay ratings of frequency (RPFR) and feeling fidelity (RPFF) were used to answer the questions of interest.

The first question asked whether gender pairing, same sex or opposite sex, would influence performance. No significant multivariate differences were found, $F < 1.00$. Similarly, no differences were found in the performances of counselors in ordinal position one and in ordinal position two, F (2,34) = 1.33, $p < .28$. However, significant differences between male and female counselors did exist, F (2,34) = 6.95, $p < .003$. The univariate ANOVA for RPFR was significant, F (1,35) = 6.79, $p < .01$, and the ANOVA for RPFF approached significance, F (1,35) = 3.49, $p < .06$. Females produced more reflection of feeling responses and their responses tended to be more accurate than those of males.

The fourth question asked whether there would be differences in the performance of male and female ordinal position two counselor if they were paired with same or opposite sex partners. To answer this question simple main effects analyses of variance (Kirk, 1982) were conducted. When male counselor twos were compared to female counselor twos for same sex dyads, no differences were revealed either for RPFR or for RPFF. However, significant differences between these two groups for opposite sex dyads for both RPFR, F (1,44) = 9.57, $p < .003$, and RPFF, F (1,44) = 7.68, $p < .008$, were discovered. On both dependent measures, females in ordinal position two who had a male partner in position one outperformed those females who had a female in position one (see Table 1).

Discussion

One possible explanation as to why females produced more reflection of feeling responses is that they historically had a head start on males in comfortably responding to emotions of others. Most subjects grew up during the 1940's and 1950's when cultural influences favorably socialized females for being more sensitive to and active in discussing feelings.

Perhaps the more interesting finding was the differential performance of females who had male versus female role-play partners. Females who first observed male partners in the practice both produced more reflection of feeling responses and were more accurate than their female counterparts who first observed female partners. This intriguing result must be interpreted in light of the small n's within each cell. Assuming that the result is not spurious due to that weakness, a "prestigious-coping model" hypothesis is offered as a possible explanation.

The literature on modeling supports the expectation that prestigious rather than uninspiring (Bandura, 1977) and coping rather than mastery (Meichenbaum, 1977) models would be more effective. Females in this study may have benefitted by observing models who were <u>both</u> prestigious and coping. Perhaps many of the females, reflecting traditional expectations, viewed the males as more prestigious prior to the role play and then observed their actual "muddling through" or coping performance. A possible sequence of thoughts among females with male partners may have proceeded as, "He's probably fairly competent" (prior to observation) and then "He's not as competent as I had imagined -- I can do just as well or

better than that" (prior to her performance).

Whereas the females may have become encouraged about their own counseling skills after observing the males, the males may have felt uncomfortable with their partners, due to traditional gender role influences, and therefore were tentative in reflecting feelings.

In reviewing the influence of gender and counseling, Tanney and Birk (1978) emphasized the importance of looking at other counselor-client characteristics. Barnikiotes and Merluzzi (1981) found that sex-role orientation (e.g., egalitarian versus traditional) played an important role in how comfortable potential clients were with counselors. In their study, subjects (i.e., undergraduate students) predicted that they would be more comfortable with egalitarian counselors.

The present study did not examine variables like sex-role orientation or other model characteristics that may have interacted with gender. The findings of this study are suggestive that these variables may have an important impact in the role-play practice situation.

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